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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 000291

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [KS](#) [KN](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FEBRUARY 6 MEETING WITH DFM
BORODAVKIN: AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, NORTH KOREA

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Borodavkin told Ambassador February 6 that Russia was prepared to cooperate with the U.S. to "assure American success" in Afghanistan, citing economic and humanitarian assistance, the NATO transit agreement, planned SCO conference in March, infrastructure projects, counterterrorism and counternarcotics cooperation. He repeated GOR denials that there was any link between Moscow's aid package and Kyrgyzstan President Bakiyev's announcement about closing Manas Air Base. He expressed concern that if the U.S. destroyed Taliban infrastructure in the southwest and central part of the country, it would push the Taliban north, closer to the borders with Central Asian states, which would pose a threat to Russia. Citing Russia's strong historical and cultural ties to Iran, Borodavkin reiterated doubts that Iran was seeking a nuclear weapon, but agreed it would not be in Russia's interest for Iran to develop nuclear weapons. Conceding Iran was a "difficult partner," he stressed that the U.S. and Russia should discuss how to address Iran's security concerns. What would happen in the Iranian elections depended a lot on the Ayatollahs. Reporting on his January 28-30 visit to Pyongyang, Borodavkin said rumors of Kim Jong-il's illness appeared true. It was necessary for the Six-Party process to set clear goals at each step of the way, starting with disablement. The DPRK had told him that if there was no progress by the end of February on deliveries, they would start their own withdrawal of fuel. In return for dismantlement, the DPRK wanted a light-water reactor. The GOR was concerned that if Japan made changes to the Statement of Principles that North Korea could not accept, it could open a Pandora's box. End summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador and DFM Aleksey Borodavkin discussed Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea February 6, with the Ambassador noting the opportunities for the U.S. and Russia to expand cooperation in all three areas and highlighting the February 4 P5-plus-1 meeting, and the upcoming DAS-led Afghanistan and Six-Party working group meetings.

Afghanistan

13. (C) Borodavkin repeated President Medvedev's and FM Lavrov's statements that Russia was prepared to cooperate with the U.S. on Afghanistan. Noting that Moscow was ready to "do a lot to assure American success," Borodavkin highlighted the NATO Transit agreement as an example of effective, practical cooperation. Russia had already sought

to provide assistance, such as the \$200 million in weapons it had given some years before, many of which, he said, unfortunately had not been used. Nonetheless, Russia was interested in selling weapons to Afghanistan. Russian weapons would be useful to the Afghan Army because it already had Soviet technology, he stressed. Furthermore, Russia was providing not just assistance to ISAF, but also thousands of dollars of humanitarian aid. Two million dollars would be provided through the World Bank in the following year, and \$38 million in assistance for infrastructure projects, such as for electric power stations. Russia was also looking at contributing to the funds required to rebuild the Salang tunnel.

14. (C) At a political level, Borodavkin said, Russia felt the need to provide assistance also to its neighbors to help them address threats from Afghanistan and Pakistan. To further this effort, Russia had proposed a conference of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in March, and hoped the U.S. would attend, as an observer. He expressed the hope that the U.S. would change its position on not inviting Russia to ISAF-contributors' meetings. Moscow believed it was very important for the SCO, NATO, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to cooperate on counterterrorism and counternarcotics (CN) efforts, Borodavkin stressed. Narcotics trafficking was the most important concern for Moscow, because drugs from Afghanistan were entering Russia. But it was also a major concern for both the U.S. and Russia, because narcotrafficking was financing the insurgents.

15. (C) Borodavkin expressed concern that as the U.S.

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increased its contingent in Afghanistan, as President Obama had promised, the U.S. military might destroy Taliban infrastructure and push the Taliban further north, closer to the borders of Central Asia. This would threaten the Central Asian countries and destabilize currently stable areas. He said Russia did not see how Afghanistan could hold elections, with 70 percent of the country controlled by the Taliban. He questioned whether Karzai was conducting dialogue with the Taliban moderates, or with the Taliban leadership.

16. (C) Moscow's channels to the Afghanistan government were "not bad," Borodavkin said in response to a question by the Ambassador, particularly now that the former Minister of Interior had left. He said Moscow would like to have a dialogue on broader issues regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan, and would welcome a visit by Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke or General Petraeus.

Manas

17. (C) The Ambassador expressed appreciation for the GOR's statements of willingness to strengthen cooperation and dialogue on Afghanistan, and its efforts to date such as the NATO transit agreement, but noted the concerns at Kyrgyz President Bakiyev's announcement that he would close Manas Air Base. Russian desire to "assure U.S. success" should extend to expressions of support for Manas to Kyrgyz leaders.

He urged the GOR to consider ways in which NATO could add value to our dialogue, and to work with us on provision of arms to the Afghan National Army. He noted the February 10-11 DAS-led experts' meeting would be important in identifying areas for increased cooperation.

18. (C) Borodavkin reiterated GOR statements that Bakiyev's announcement that he would close Manas Air Base during his press conference with Medvedev had been "a coincidence," and had not been linked to Russia's offer to provide aid and loans to Kyrgyzstan. Central Asian partners were "very complicated," Borodavkin lamented, saying it took "months or years to persuade or dissuade them" from a course of action, and citing efforts to dissuade Karimov from a "6 3" format.

Iran

¶9. (C) Emphasizing that Russia and Iran had been neighbors for centuries and had strong traditional, economic and cultural ties, Borodavkin said Moscow wanted peace and friendship with Iran and Tehran wanted the same. Relations between the two were currently focused on economic and humanitarian cooperation, which were "not going badly." Still, Iran was a difficult partner, with whom it was hard to reach agreement, but they were important for Central Asia and Afghanistan.

¶10. (C) While acknowledging that the nuclear file was not his province (DFM Ryabkov handles it), Borodavkin said that although Moscow agreed a nuclear-armed Iran was not in its interest, the GOR still had no real proof that Iran was seeking to build a nuclear weapon, and had doubts about their ability to do so. We needed to recognize the psychological aspect of Iran's behavior and its lack of self-confidence. He added that while "in principle," Russia was with the U.S., Borodavkin urged the U.S. to focus on how to address Iran's security issues.

¶11. (C) In commenting on the political situation in Iran, Borodavkin said there were two Iranian societies: the elite, who wanted more openness and more contact with the West; and the harder-line Islamic traditionalists. Although when he had visited Iran, the Russian Ambassador had taken him to the country house of an Iranian colleague, where they had drunk alcohol and whose wife was wearing jeans and a t-shirt, the majority of Iranians followed more traditional, Islamist practices and beliefs. It was difficult to predict who would win the elections; a lot depended on what the Ayatollahs did. While they had supported Ahmadinejad, if they withdrew that support now, it would be an admission they had made a mistake, so it was unlikely they would withdraw their support.

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¶12. (C) The Ambassador told Borodavkin that, as the U.S. considered engaging in greater dialogue with Iran, it would be important for partners like Russia to invest more in putting pressure on Iran to live up to its commitments. It was also important for the P5-plus-1 to maintain unity and to continue to emphasize that we would not tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran.

North Korea

¶13. (C) Commenting on his January 27-30 visit to the DPRK, Borodavkin said the rumors of Kim Jong-il's poor health were true. The Chinese had seen him at a January 23 meeting and had said he was thinner; quietly but clearly, North Koreans had started thinking about his succession. In response to Ambassador's question, he said Moscow was concerned about press reports that North Korea might be preparing to test-fire a long-range Taepodong-2 missile and noted that the last one had missed Russia's economic zone by only 10 kilometers.

¶14. (C) Reporting on his meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Borodavkin said the Six-Party process had to set clear goals at each step of the way. The first priority was disablement. If this succeeded, North Korea would not be able to weaponize plutonium, and add to the stocks they already possessed. The DPRK said they would be ready at the end of March to disable, but added "killer" conditions regarding fuel deliveries. North Korea told him it wanted a light-water reactor in exchange for dismantlement, Borodavkin said, but he had responded that as the DPRK was not a member of the IAEA or NPT, it did not get "to play those games."

¶15. (C) While acknowledging the need to verify that North Korea did not have nuclear weapons and for strict checks in

accordance with the IAEA, Borodavkin said it had been a mistake by the U.S. to link verification to the supply of fuel. The DPRK had said that if there was no progress by the end of February on deliveries, it would slow down its own removal of nuclear reactor fuel. Borodavkin said that the December protocol had been "very weak," and the visit had been little more than a "tourist trip." Stressing that we did not need a specially-tailored system of guarantees, Borodavkin urged the parties to work with the DPRK in a "framework of dialogue." He expressed concern that if the Japanese made changes to the Statement of Principles, which the North Koreans did not like, it could "open a Pandora's box to all sorts of ills." The Ambassador emphasized the importance of the February 18-20 Northeast Asia Peace and Security Working Group meeting in Moscow as a means to further the process.

BEYRLE